

From "The Citizen", a series of "**Do You Know?**" features on GRFC

Saturday 9 September 1933:

The Gloucester Rugby F. C. was formed on September 15, 1873, and that this season the Club will celebrate its Diamond Jubilee.

Mr. E. T. Gardom, Clerk to the County Council, was elected on the Committee at the first annual meeting, and was also a player.

The first match was played against the College School on the site of the present headquarters at Kingsholm. Only ten Gloucester players fielded, but they proved too weighty for the "boys."

The Gloucester Club's first balance sheet showed a total income of £11 from all sources.

Last season (1932-33) the club had a total income of £3,332 1s. 5d. Gate receipts amounted to £2,113 9s. 10d., and members' subscriptions realised £886 3s. !

Saturday 7 October 1933:

Gloucester were pioneers of the passing game, and in season 1882-3 (the City Club's invincible year) they gave Cardiff an object lesson, winning by 1 goal 6 tries to nil.

Cardiff introduced the four three-quarters in 1885-6, but years before Gloucester had played seven men behind the scrum – one back, three three-quarters and three half-backs.

Wales played four three-quarters in 1885-6, but did not adopt the system permanently until some seasons later. The other Unions came into line in 1893-4.

The friendly rivalry between Gloucester and Cardiff ran to its highest pitch in 1888-9. Three matches were contested without a victory being recorded by either side.

In the fourth meeting Gloucester won at Cardiff by 2 goals (1p.) 1 try to 1 goal 2 tries. The late G. F. ("Dicky") Dere scored the final try, and the captain (T. Graces Smith) gave the City a glorious triumph by adding the goal points.

Over 2,000 Gloucester enthusiasts accompanied the team to Cardiff on this occasion, and the players had a great reception on their return home. A band met them at the station, and several of the team were carried shoulder high through the streets.

Saturday 14 October 1933:

Gloucester's last season at the Spa ground was 1890-1, when under T. Bagwell's captaincy the City had one of the best records in the history of the Club: Played 26 – Won 21, Lost 2, Drawn 3. Score for, 27 goals 47 tries: Against 5 goals 12 tries.

The two defeats were from Swansea and Penarth, both away. Cardiff were beaten twice – 1 goal 1 try to nil at Gloucester, and 1 goal 1 try to 1 try at Cardiff.

Against Llanelly, Gloucester won at home 3 tries to 1, and drew the return game at Llanelly, nothing being scored.

Season 1890-1 was the occasion of the first visit of the Old Merchant Taylors on Boxing Day, a fixture which has been continued practically ever since.

A great victory was obtained over Swansea in the return match. The Welshmen held an unbeaten record, but Gloucester proved the superior side, and won by 1 goal 1 try to nil.

In connection with this memorable match there was an unfortunate sequel, and one that severed the Club's connection with the Spa.

A too liberal application of salt on the frost-bound ground ruined the grass, and the Cricket Club served the footballers notice to quit.

The Football Club accepted the inevitable, and established headquarters at Kingsholm, now one of the best appointed Rugby Union enclosures in the country.

Saturday 28 October 1933:

In 1893-4 the Gloucester Club was suspended for a month and the captain (the late J. Hanman) for the remainder of the season for breaking the transfer laws.

The City club included W. Shewell, a Stroud player, against Newport without a transfer – the laws were very stringent in those days – and the suspension followed an inquiry by the Rugby Union.

To help recover the financial loss incurred by the club, the captain arranged a match between a Gloucestershire and South Wales XV, and a Yorkshire team.

This was before the split in the Rugby Union, and Yorkshire brought a powerful side, including Walter Jackson (ex-Gloucester) who had removed to Halifax.

The Gloucestershire and Welsh team recorded a splendid victory by 2 goals 3 tries to nil.

The brothers Percy and Frank Stout, two of Gloucester's famous Internationals, made their debut at Rugby under the captaincy of A. C. Williams in 1895-6.

Former Association players and Old Cryptians, the brothers quickly took to the handling game and gained great distinction.

Frank Stout was awarded his first England cap, when under 20 years of age, against Wales, at Newport, in 1897. Altogether he made 14 appearances for England.

Percy, who was also a brilliant Soccer player, represented England on five occasions.

W. Spiers also started for Gloucester in 1895-6. He subsequently went to Devonport Albion, and for several seasons was among the leading forwards in the country, but he failed to get "capped."

After giving up the game Spiers [sic] attached himself to the Plymouth Albion club, and rendered invaluable assistance in coaching the players.

Saturday 4 November 1933:

During Walter Taylor's four years' captaincy of the Gloucester Club the team engaged in 132 matches, of which 92 were won, as against 26 defeats and 14 drawn games; and scored 1,292 points to 477 by opponents.

Some wonderful triumphs were recorded against the strongest teams in England and Wales.

The great achievement in 1896-7 was the defeat of Llanelly, who lost a much-cherished record at Kingsholm.

C. Hall (who gained his International Cap in 1901) scored a try, which Percy Stout converted, and Gloucester won by 5 points to 3. The victorious City team were presented with blazers as mementoes of the occasion.

In Taylor's second season Cardiff were defeated at Cardiff Arms Park by 9 points to 5 (G. F. Clutterbuck, now a committeeman and one of the club selectors, dropped a

goal and scored a try, converted by the captain), and drawn games were played with Newport, Llanelly and Swansea.

In the match against Swansea, at Kingsholm, Gloucester scored 5 points to 3, but the goal points were disallowed owing to A. Stephens handling the ball after it had been placed.

Season 1898-9 was noteworthy for the defeat of the famous Welsh quartette – Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Llanelly. The victory over Llanelly was the first ever gained by Gloucester at Stradey Park.

Swansea lost a brilliant record at Kingsholm by 4pts. to 3 (J. Cook dropped the goal); Cardiff were defeated by 5pts. to 3; and Newport 11pts. to nil.

Gloucester had not previously beaten Newport for 11 years. Arthur Gould, the famous Welsh International, was tempted out of his retirement for this match to fill a vacancy, but was not a success.

Saturday 25 November 1933:

It was during G. Roman's captaincy of the City team that D. R. Gent joined the Gloucester Club. At the time Gent was at St. Paul's Training College, Cheltenham.

Gent's association at half-back with Jim Stephens was brilliantly successful, and as a club pair they were equal to any combination in the country.

Gent was honoured with International distinction, but Stephens got no further than on the reserve.

They were worthy successors of another clever pair of half-backs in G. Hall and R. Goddard, who with the late J. Cook and Jack Lewis (a splendid forward) joined the Northern Union.

In 1904-5 Gloucester, for the first time, had to acknowledge defeat from the principal clubs in the county – Bristol, Cheltenham, Lydney (at Kingsholm by 8-6) and Cinderford.

Big scores run up by the City that season were 3 goals 10 tries against the Old Edwardians, and 6 goals 3 tries against the United Services. A. Hudson scored 6 tries in the latter match.

Romans was acknowledged one of the best full-backs of his day, but he was unfortunate in being contemporary with that super player, H. T. Gamlin.

On seven or eight occasions the Gloucester captain was chosen as reserve for England, but the coveted International cap never came his way.

Mr. Romans retains his keen interest in the game, and frequently officiates as referee in matches in the district and outside the county.

Saturday 2 December 1933:

Gloucester's record season in the matter of point scoring was in 1905-6 (W. A. Johns held the captaincy), when the City aggregated 661 points (86 goals 82 tries).

Hudson also established an individual record, which still stands, by scoring 41 tries. He and Gent were "capped" for England.

Some phenomenal scores were piled up in several matches: 10 goals 6 tries v. Bream; 1 goal 8 tries v. Clifton; 8 goals 4 tries v. Bedford; 6 goals 2 tries v. Old

Merchant Taylors; 10 goals 7 tries v. Plymouth (L. Vears scored 6 tries in this match); and 1 goal 5 tries v. Leicester.

Newport were beaten 5-0, and a draw was played with Cardiff 3-3. Of 37 games, 26 were won and only eight lost.

The famous "All Blacks," however, administered a crushing defeat to the City (44 points to nil), but Gloucester were severely handicapped in having two players (Hudson and Wood) injured.

One of the cleverest back divisions ever fielded by Gloucester appeared under Johns' successful leadership, viz., G. Romans and A. E. Wood (full-backs); C. Smith, E. Hall, J. Harrison and A. Hudson (three-quarters); D. R. Gent and J. Stephens (half-backs).

The forwards were selected from W. A. Johns, Gordon Vears, Bert Parham, G. Matthews, F. Pegler, H. Collins, J. Jewell, J. Holder, H. Quixley and J. Merchant.

The gymnasium at Kingsholm was opened at the start of the season by Mr. Russell Rea, M.P. for the city.

Saturday 16 December 1933:

Season 1913-14, with George Holford as captain of the Gloucester team, was remarkable for some notable victories: Harlequins, at Twickenham (8-0), Swansea (6-0), Cardiff (6-4), Oxford University, at Oxford (9-6), and Llanelly (11-0); while Cardiff were run to a try margin at Cardiff.

The City's triumph over the Harlequins, who were then at their zenith under the leadership of Adrian Stoop caused a sensation.

The famous International did not take part in this match, but the Harlequins had a number of star players in their ranks including John Birkett, D. Lambert and Frank Stoop, all of whom were "capped" by England.

Gloucester had Fred Webb, Alec Lewis, Lionel Hamblin at W. Washbourne at three-quarter, with A. Hall and J. Baker at half-back. They were a fine combination, and did great things at Twickenham that afternoon, 20 years ago.

Birkett was a big, strong, thrustful centre, but he was marked relentlessly by the Gloucester "terriers," though on many occasions it took two, and sometimes three players to bring him down.

W. Dix, who dropped out of the City team in season 1913-14, was replaced by J. Baker, who had previously done good work for Cinderford. Baker and "Tart" Hall enjoyed a good deal of success at half-back, both for the City Club and the County.

Frank Ayliffe, J. F. Lawson and W. Parham, were new forwards who appeared for Gloucester in 1913-14, and Sid Smart gained his first International cap, which was added to in later seasons – after the Great War.

It was not until season 1919-20 that Rugby football was resumed seriously. The Gloucester players at the outset of the War volunteered practically to a man for service, and bore their part nobly in the great struggle.

The memorial erected in the gymnasium to the gallant lads who lost their lives in France and other battle fronts bears silent tribute to their memories.